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# Nina Teicholz

**Nina Teicholz** is a journalist who became an advocate opposed to the idea that saturated fat is unhealthy and should be minimized in the American diet.

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Nina Teicholz

## Education and early life

Nina Teicholz grew up in North Berkeley, California.<sup>[1]</sup>

She went to Yale University and Stanford University, and earned a Master's degree from Oxford University.<sup>[2]</sup>

## Career

She worked as a reporter for National Public Radio<sup>[3]</sup> and became a freelancer, contributing to publications including *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *Gourmet*, *The New Yorker*, *The Economist*, *Salon*, and *Men's Health*.<sup>[2]</sup>

She said that became interested in dietary fats while doing a series of stories investigating food for *Gourmet*, and was assigned a story on trans fat that was published in 2004.<sup>[4]</sup>

Her 2014 book, *The Big Fat Surprise: Why Butter, Meat and Cheese Belong in a Healthy Diet*, traced the history of US diet guidelines; in the book she investigated the science behind the guidelines and the influence of industry lobbying on them, and also questioned their emphasis on avoiding saturated fat. Teicholz advised readers to "eat butter; drink milk whole, and feed it to the whole family. Stock up on creamy cheeses, offal, and sausage, and yes, bacon".<sup>[5][6]</sup> The book made *The*

*New York Times* Best Seller list that year,<sup>[7]</sup> and was named one of the Top 10 Non-Fiction Books of 2014 by *The Wall Street Journal*<sup>[8]</sup> and one of the year's best science books by *The Economist*.<sup>[9]</sup> The book was criticized by nutritionists including Marion Nestle.<sup>[10][11]</sup>

Teicholz authored an opinion piece with similar themes in *The Wall Street Journal* in October 2014 that caught the attention of John Arnold, who recruited her to join the efforts funded through the Laura and John Arnold Foundation to fight obesity, namely through the Nutrition Science Initiative, which does research, the Action Now Initiative, a lobbying group, and the Nutrition Coalition, which is aimed at improving dietary guidelines.<sup>[12]</sup>

In February 2015, the US Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee (DGAC) released its report, written to provide a foundation for the 2015 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, and *The New York Times* published an op-ed by Teicholz criticizing the committee and its work.<sup>[13]</sup> The Arnold Foundation funded further work by Teicholz on the DGAC report, which published in the *British Medical Journal* in September 2015.<sup>[12][14]</sup> In the BMJ article, Teicholz continued the themes of her book and her February op-ed, and wrote that the DGAC showed bias against fat and meat and did not use all the available evidence, and that members had undisclosed conflicts of interest.<sup>[10][15]</sup> The BMJ circulated a preprint of the article with a press release, and Teicholz' claims were widely covered in the media.<sup>[12][15][16][17]</sup>

Teicholz' claims were harshly criticized by the DGAC, the US Department of Health and Human Services, the Center for Science in the Public Interest, and others, including a petition signed by 180 scientists, and they called for BMJ to retract the article or issue corrections.<sup>[10][12][15][18][19]</sup> The BMJ issued a correction in October 2015 and another in December 2016, the latter with a statement that after an independent review of the paper, it had decided not to retract it.<sup>[20][21][22][23]</sup>

Meanwhile the Arnold Foundation had been pressing for Congressional hearings about the DGAC report and attempted to block the release of the 2015 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, and through its lobbying group arranged meetings for Teicholz with members of Congress and White House staff.<sup>[10][12]</sup> Teicholz and the Arnold Foundation were criticized at the time for being allies of the meat and dairy industries in their lobbying and other public relations efforts to maintain high levels of meat and dairy consumption by US consumers.<sup>[24][25]</sup>

Teicholz' advocacy has been criticized by Marion Nestle for making strong claims about the benefits of a low carb, high fat diet that go beyond what the science can support;<sup>[10]</sup> Nestle wrote of Teicholz' advocacy: "It does little to foster the health of the public to make nutrition science appear more controversial than it really is."<sup>[13]</sup>

In 2017, the president of the World Heart Federation, Salim Yusuf stated that Teicholz.. "shook up the nutrition world but she got it right."<sup>[26]</sup>

## Selected works

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## External links

- Official website (<http://ninateicholz.com>)
- Podcast interview on STEM-Talk (<https://www.ihmc.us/stemtalk/episode-52/>), Episode 52. published 5 December 2017

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